2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

and docility, especially to older women. This last was intended to stand her in good stead when she went to be married in a strange village and would be expected to show subservience to her mother-in-law. At the same time, since the girl belonged to a high-ranking clan, she knew, and so did those who were training her, that she would eventually have to exercise authority and teach others what to do and show them how to do it. She would also be expected to have a mind of her own and to speak out on occasions to her husband and, when she grew older, to rebuke women in her house or in her service if they did anything amiss.

In pre-European days, between the private puberty ritual and her marriage, the Ngoni girl went through another ceremony, the *umsindo*. This was a pre-marriage rite, and was in many instances followed almost immediately by marriage. It was held for girls of high-ranking families, though their companions from their own and other villages shared in the ritual. The ceremony was abandoned after the missionaries came, but many of the songs and the dances were well-known to the leading Ngoni women. I saw many *umsindo* dances in the northern and central kingdoms and collected a number of the songs which were still in use, some sung to solo instruments, such as the *igubu*, and others sung at funerals or at tribal gatherings. Those *umsindo* songs which referred to sexual intercourse and used expressions which were considered obscene, had been sung only at the ceremony itself. The Ngoni made a practice of referring to genital organs and to sexual intercourse in veiled language. As soon as the meaning of the terms became obvious, they were disguised by other allusive terms. The degree of obscenity in the actual words of songs was therefore very difficult to establish, but Ngoni informants were always clear about which could be sung in public and which only on occasions of licence or strictly in private.

The *umsindo* ceremony as a preliminary to marriage fulfilled certain functions. It was a public declaration that the girl for whom it was held had been examined and found to be a virgin, for it was not held for anyone who had been deflowered in earlier love affairs. It emphasized the social rank and the wealth of the girl's father, for only rich and important men could afford to hold *umsindo* for their daughters. It had a strong element of a *rite de passage* in it, for the girls were secluded in a hut during most of the ceremony, they fasted, they were given instruction by older women, and they were finally 'brought out' of the hut and adorned with parts of the beasts slaughtered, and with beads given as presents by friends and relatives. Perhaps the chief significance of the *umsindo* was the fact that it was a ceremony held for the girl in her father's village. It was an assertion of her membership in her own family and village circle, and of her father's status and of his regard for her. There is no doubt that the Ngoni women of high rank had a keen sense of their own importance and position; the *umsindo* ceremony

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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returning from work in the south about every two years or so, even if it was only for temporary residence in the village, mitigated, though only to some extent, the social disintegration and upheaval caused by the absence of so many young men.

In pre-European days, girls waited to marry for five to ten years after attaining puberty. For high-born Ngoni girls a further 'pre-marriage' ceremony and ritual took place immediately before marriage. This was after the girl and young man accepted by her as a 'lover' had been courting for some time but before any formal betrothal took place which involved the approach of the two families through intermediaries, and the discussions about the transfer of cattle. The Ngoni said that this pre-marriage rite was the equivalent for the girls of taking the head-ring for the men, because when it was held it was a public declaration that marriage was now possible for the girl, and she was acknowledged as having reached adult, that is married women's, status.

This ceremony began by the senior women of the girl's home sending for her father and saying to him: 'This child is now grown up. She is ready to be prepared to enter the state of adulthood.' One of the Ngoni names for the ceremony meant—'staying in the hut as if fasting'—a ritual practice associated with rain-making by the Paramount, and with taking 'medicines' for strengthening a new Paramount or chief on his accession. The girl, with her companion, spent two or three days in a hut, hidden behind upright mats curved so that no one could see round them. They were naked except for a long soft leather cloak worn over one shoulder and tied under the right arm. During this seclusion they had food brought to them by the senior women of the girl's house. While the girls were hidden away the village women cooked quantities of meat and brewed beer to entertain friends and relatives of the girl's father. During the feasting and drinking the senior women, with the men, danced the special dances and sang the songs associated with this ritual. Some of

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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885 533 831 the songs had veiled allusions to sexual intercourse and sex organs but the majority were songs recalling historical events. Others warned young wives against jealousy and strife in polygamous households, and these again were couched in veiled language, because the Ngoni preferred allusive references to anything touching on sex life.

292 885 301 When the girl and her companion emerged from the hut of seclusion, they were fully dressed in a short leather skirt, cut on a circular pattern, and a long leather cloak often trimmed with a fringe of tiny brass bells or small copper beads which were heirlooms belonging to the girl's father's house. The girl who was known as the 'owner of the premarriage ceremony' wore strips of meat strung together like [237] beads hanging over her chest. The fat from the kidneys (always used in Ngoni ritual) was twisted into a necklace, and the skins of cows' tails, flayed and spread out were worn hanging from the waist, one in front and one behind. At the close of the ceremonies the skins and fat used for ornament were burned by a stream and the ashes swept into the water —again a typical Ngoni ritual act.

885 556 593 In one sense this ritual was a form of social announcement that the girl was now ready for marriage, and the marriage negotiations and full marriage ceremony followed soon after. It was also a way of emphasizing the father's pride in his daughter, and he showed it by the lavish feasting and beer, by the standard of performance of the dances and songs and by decorating the girl with meat, fat, and skins from the cattle of his house. This was the last act he performed on behalf of his daughter, for the actual marriage ceremony took place at the bridegroom's village. It showed him as a man of substance, because only rich men and leading men could afford the outlay. It also showed the girl as a virtuous woman, for [836] the ritual was never performed unless the girl was a virgin, and the senior women had been able, after examining her, to say to her father: 'Her cattle are full.'

177 885 This ritual was given up about the time the missions began

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

842 woman, who was sometimes a younger sister or a junior father's
595 daughter. This woman then became a linked co-wife (*nshanzi*)[7] subordinate to her barren sister. If the linked wife was also barren then the man could demand another one. The barren woman was never sent back to her own relatives but continued to live with her husband. Children of the linked wife were allocated to her and she
587 became responsible for their upbringing. Similarly if a wife died before she had borne a child a linked co-wife replaced her.

841 If the man was sterile he used to arrange for a friend to sleep
837 secretly with his wife so that she should conceive. The friend was rewarded with a beast after a child had been born but the reason for making the reward was kept secret. If a seedraiser was caught he was killed for committing adultery, despite the fact of his having been called in by the husband.[8]

839 As well as being fertile, wives were expected to be chaste. On
684 this point the evidence is clear. Wiese states that adulterers were always killed;[9] all subsequent writers have agreed with him. I was told that if the woman's husband was not an important person he was sometimes placated with a present of cattle. If the husband persisted in referring the matter to the chief the senior lieutenants of the chief might intercede on his behalf, if this was the man's first offence. Otherwise the man and the woman were both killed by one of the senior lieutenants.

562 The approved mode of behaviour for women was chastity before
[831] marriage, submission in the choice of husband, and fertility and fidelity in marriage. These obligations were clear-cut and definite and of universal applicability. The obligations of affines towards
602 one another were not so straightforward, and their fulfilment was a process marked by ritual transfers of cattle and carefully prescribed modes of behaviour. In particular the relationship of a man to his
606 wife's mother was altered progressively from one of strict avoidance to openly expressed friendliness. The stages in the process represented the gradual acceptance of the man into the family of his wife's parents as a son-in-law, the father of their daughter's children.

586 Marriage was entered into without compulsion on either side, but
[584] the right to terminate it was held in the man's group alone. A woman could not on any ground secure a divorce. All my informants agreed on this point. A man could divorce his wife at any time by sending her back to her own kinsfolk, giving her a small present as an indication that he had divorced her. If he had offered bridewealth for her, her kinsfolk were under an obligation to provide him with a

[7] Read, in her 'Moral code', p. 18 translates this word (*nhlanzi*) as 'substitute'. Lancaster, 'Tentative chronology', p. 79, gives the word as *nshlanze*. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 39 translates the Swazi word *inhlanti* as 'subordinate co-wife'. I have chosen the translation 'linked co-wife' as there are other kinds of subordinate co-wife who are not *nshanzi*, and some *nshanzi* are not substitutes.

[8] See below, p. 34.

[9] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expedicao . . .', p. 471, and 'Geschichte . . .', pp. 189-90.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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If a women
837 believes that her husband is committing adultery with
578 another woman she endeavours to find out who the woman is. She usually refuses to speak to her when they meet, and if they are forced to come into contact, as at a beer party, there is likely to be a fight between them. A parturient woman may ask her midwife to pretend that there are difficulties in labour so that her husband can be called upon to confess his adultery and name his mistress.

864 The sexual aspect of marriage influences the training and experiences of children. The explanation given for moving children from their parents' hut to a dormitory at the age of six or seven is that by then children are 'wise enough' and will talk to their playmates about their parents' sexual activities in the hut. Girls aged
[897] five years or so start to imitate the dances of their elders and to
[533] join in the dance competitions when girls come from other villages. Many of the songs sung at these dances are concerned with various
[535] aspects of sexual relations. At age ten, or sometimes earlier they also begin to practice the most important of the women's erotic dances, *cimwangalala*,[11] which is performed only indoors. At a
881 girl's first menstruation she is secluded for from a few days up to a
864 month, and is tested by women who have borne children to see that she can dance *cimwangalala* and other erotic dances effectively, that she knows the formalities of copulation, and how to behave when she menstruates. Even where the girl is secluded for the full month, and her training is accompanied by a great deal of symbolism and ceremonial, there is little reference to her potential fertility.

864 There is no formal instruction in sexual matters for boys, and there are no erotic dances for them. They learn their sexlore from their older companions in the bush or in the dormitory. The only
● [831] specific aspect of sexual maturation that appears to receive emphasis is the growth of large testicles, and boys brew themselves medicines to expedite this.

842 Both fertility and sexual satisfaction can be facilitated by the use
830 of medicines. There is a well-known medicine for the cure of barrenness, and there are many kinds of aphrodisiacs.[12] A girl
[864] learns the use of aphrodisiacs from other women in the village, and she is formally taught sexual behaviour by her puberty instructress.[13]
881 The old woman who is in charge of her puberty seclusion, who is
593 sometimes the girl's grandmother, supervises the sexual behaviour of the girl for the first few years of her married life. If, as a bride, she succeeds in forcing her husband to give her a present before she will lie with him, the present must be handed over to the puberty instructress the next morning. Later she may demonstrate her
[535] erotic proficiency by dancing[14] in the hut before her husband and her instructress.

[11] Meaning, in Nsenga, 'the thing of you just sleeping' (i.e. copulating).
[12] Such as *mlololo*, a root, and *kajolojolo*, a plant.
[13] *Mphungu*.
[14] The dance is called *cikapa*. Cf. Nyanja *kapakapa*, swinging backwards and forwards.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Girls are not examined to see if they have been deflowered. Many girls have love affairs with young boys before they reach puberty, and at one time children built play-houses, after the manner of the Cewa, where they pretended to be adults playing at cooking and copulation. The Cewa encouraged this among their own children and at puberty Cewa girls, if not already deflowered, had their hymen forcibly ruptured in a prescribed manner. We have seen that the Ngoni formerly expected girls to be chaste before marriage while the Cewa believed that if a girl did not copulate at puberty she would die. It seems nowadays that adults expect that pre-pubescent boys and girls will play together sexually and that, provided this takes place with a certain amount of discretion, nothing is done to stop it. Boys and girls visit each other in dormitories, hoping that their voices will not be recognized by people in neighbouring huts. After puberty young men and women continue to flirt together, individuals varying in the extent to which they copulate. Grown men do not usually sleep with young girls, nor grown women with young boys, and if this does happen and is discovered there is always the suspicion of sorcery. The Ngoni believe, with most of their neighbours, that in order to make many of the anti-social medicines of sorcery effective, a sorcerer must copulate with some partner morally forbidden to him (or her), such as a close relative or a person of greatly disparate age or an animal. With this background of belief, Ngoni say that after puberty young men and women naturally like to frolic together and not with their juniors. Within this framework of tolerated covert activity no particular arrangements are made at puberty, save that if a man is betrothed to a young girl he will be invited formally to come and sleep with her once while she is secluded.

Thus from an early age their future roles as husbands and wives condition the sexual activities of boys and girls. A girl who allows herself to be seduced too easily is regarded as foolish and a man who is for ever chasing unmarried girls when he should be founding a family is regarded as immature. But sexual activity is taken for granted, and the only stipulations are that it should be conducted discreetly so that the older people in the village are not forced to notice it, and that unmarried girls should not bear live children. Knowledge of abortifacients seems to be fairly common and recently contraceptives, issued originally to soldiers in the 1939-45 war, have come into use. Few cases of seduction of unmarried girls come before the courts.

Despite the emphasis on sexual satisfaction rather than on fertility, Ngoni men and women still desire children. This is so for men despite the low incidence of bridewealth payments and the uncertainty about the custody of children. A man's children may decide to live with their mother's people, but they are still his children and he can always follow them from village to village in his old age wherever they decide to settle.